

# Utah Employment First Partnership

## Employment First Priority: HB 240 (2011) and HB 296 (2012)

The Utah Employment First Partnership is a commitment among the Utah Department of Work Force Services (DWS), the Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD), the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) and the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. (DSAMH) to improve state government services focused on persons with disabilities achieving competitive, integrated and community based employment. A Unified State Plan was created in November 2011 which included a list of goals for 2012.

### OUR SHARED 2012 PLANS

The Partners established the following implementation goals for 2012:

**1. Submit and gain approval of the unified state plan from each agency Executive Director and the appropriate legislative committee;**

All Partners: Each agency director approved and signed the plan. The Unified State Plan was sent to Representative Menlove, who sponsored the bill in November of 2011.

DSAMH: DSAMH has participated in the discussion since June 2011. As a result, HB #296 passed in 2012, and DSAMH is now formally included in the partner agencies.

**2. Establish the first year calendar of meetings and gain a commitment of participation;**

All Partners: The Employment First Advisory Council established a monthly meeting schedule.

All members of the committee agreed to attend regularly. When the planning group determined to provide an advisory council role, quarterly meetings were held. Advisory Council members actively participate and attend meetings regularly.

**3. Determine the appropriate responsible parties for 2012 year goals and priorities;**

All Partners: The Employment First Advisory Council collaborates with representatives for each partner agency. Advisory council provides direction and ensures partner agencies are implementing goals and objectives within each agency and reporting to advisory council. DSPD agency representative is responsible for scheduling meeting, reminders, agendas and leading each meeting. Work Ability Utah project director coordinates meeting room location and records notes and assignments.

**4. Review, assess, and identify achievable annual year goals and priorities;**

All Partners: The advisory council members provide consistent review of the Unified State Plan and partner agencies progress in regard to expectations outlined in the plan; the advisory council outlines goals and next steps for partner agencies at each meeting. The council recommends and assists with review of current policies and practices and ensures collaboration among partner agencies.

**5. Develop realistic timeframes for 2012 year goals and priorities;**

DWS: Management will review programs and services available for individuals with disabilities and current agency processes for effectively delivering these services. A partnership with

the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) exists to ensure that employment counselors have the capability of providing effective employment services to people with disabilities. The Choose to Work (CTW) program is designed to provide individualized job development and placement services to customers with disabilities who have not been successful in obtaining employment through traditional services provided by DWS or USOR.

DSPD: Based upon the Unified State Plan and recommendations of the advisory council, DSPD is prioritizing Employment First initiatives by going through a strategic planning process to determine the optimal approach for implementation of Employment First practices within DSPD service provision. Simultaneously, implementation of an Employment First demonstration project that provides specialized training and skills will; build capacity of the DSPD provider system; and increase employment opportunities for people who receive DSPD services.

USOR: Goals and priorities for 2012 have been included in the USOR State Plan based upon the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment. In December 2012, a Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Council was created. This Council will examine USOR's current policy and guidance documents related to Supported Job Based Training (SJBT) and Supported Employment (SE) and make needed revisions. This internal council will also be responsible for writing a USOR CRP Vendor Manual.

**6. Review, revise, and implement necessary Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the Partners to emphasize employment first language;**

All Partners: Employment First Advisory Council reviewed each agency's existing MOU's. The council advised each partner agency to complete strategic planning. MOU's will be developed and reviewed by the advisory council to ensure compliance with the Unified State Plan.

**7. Review, assess, and identify possible needed changes in the partner agencies' state plans;**

All Partners: The advisory council reviewed each partner agency's eligibility and service delivery processes to evaluate and recommend areas of opportunity for Employment First language.

DWS: The DWS Integrated Workforce Plan was recently revised for the period July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2017. DWS integrates workforce development policies, procedures, and resources to provide equal access and comparable services to all customers including the following distinctive groups: customers interested in nontraditional training, older workers, low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, and other individuals with multiple barriers to employment and training. The current plan coincides with the Employment First Partnership's goals for providing viable services to individual with disabilities. This plan may be reviewed periodically to include any changes or enhancements to these programs and services as well as to ensure successful implementation of future efforts.

DSPD: At the recommendation from the Advisory council for each partner agency to develop a process to evaluate necessary changes, DSPD secured a contract with Center for Public Policy with University of Utah to facilitate a strategic planning process. This process will involve DSPD stakeholder collaboration to ensure Employment First legislation is implemented in a thoughtful, purposeful way. Implementation of Employment First legislation involves transformation of several processes that may include: internal and external training;

person centered planning; service descriptions and changes to Medicaid waivers; reimbursement methodology; etc. This contract and work will take place from August 1, 2012 to July 30, 2013.

USOR: A comprehensive, statewide assessment is jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council. The assessment describes the rehabilitation needs of:

- individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under the State Plan;
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.

Supported Employment and transition services are two areas of focus for the upcoming 2014 monitoring visit with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

DSAMH: Review contracts and Division directives in the coming year to review language and make changes to assure compliance with Employment First initiative.

#### **8. Develop strategies to promote awareness of the employment first priority throughout Utah;**

DSPD: DSPD secured a contract with Griffin-Hammis Associates to provide a one year mentor/capacity building project with two contracted DSPD providers. This project will increase knowledge and skills, and create unique, customized employment opportunities for people in DSPD services. This contract is from October 1, 2012 to September 30 2013. To date: 41 people providing employment support to people with disabilities throughout Utah have started the series of training to become nationally certified to provide customized employment. Ten people within DSPD services are being identified to go through the Discovery Process and pursue customized employment options. Additionally DSPD is a supporting partner with the Pathways to Careers project in Davis County with Pioneer Adult Rehabilitation Center which includes customized employment and paid internships. This project provides 60 individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities in Davis County with expanded employment opportunities over a three year period.

Training: An Employment First overview training was created and presented to the annual provider conference attended by DSPD contracted provider agencies and support coordinators and will be part of the annual conference scheduled for June 2013.

USOR/DSPD: Ongoing trainings (16 in 2012) which include the principles of Employment First are offered to advocacy groups, schools, parent groups, and at Utah Supported Employment Certification. An additional ten trainings about principles of Employment First have been provided to USOR District offices throughout Utah in conjunction with training about the Support Work Independence Program (HB45) for people on the DSPD waiting list.

DWS: Training is provided for all DWS employees on the Choose to Work program to ensure all employment counselors in the service areas are knowledgeable of the services available for individuals with disabilities. An employment specialist over the Choose to Work program attends quarterly meetings in the different service areas to provide on-going training to employment counselors and supervisors.

DSAMH: Informed Local Mental Health and Substance Abuse Authorities regarding Employment First legislation and priority, Incorporated Employment First language into Area Plans which are submitted by the Local Authorities annually to describe services they plan to provide in the upcoming fiscal year.

**9. Identify evaluation criteria to measure success and efficacy, and to identify potential research opportunities and partnerships;**

All Partners: The Employment First Advisory Council developed a rubric/evaluation tool for each agency to complete, based on the Employment First Emphasis declared in the Unified State Plan. Each partner agency completed the rubric and presented to Advisory Council. Advisory Council plans for 2013 include evaluation, next steps and implementation of changes from the rubric.

**10. Write, obtain approval, and implement the Strategic Implementation Plan for Fiscal Year 2012 to include; specific goals; timelines; assignments; and measurements;**

All Partners: The Employment First Advisory Council provides direction and support to each partner agency in the planning efforts unique to their agency. Quarterly updates from each agency are provided to the council. The Advisory council is responsible for monitoring partner agencies to ensure integration of common goals and parallel processes to ensure Employment First outcomes consistent with the Unified State Plan.

**Our 2013 Shared Plans:**

1. Review, assess and identify achievable annual goals and priorities.
  - a. Operationalize rubric completed by each partner agency to recommend next steps and evaluate progress.
  - b. Continue to monitor and support strategic planning efforts of each partner agency to ensure alignment and coordination of services.
  - c. Establish process/methods to measure improvement of employment outcomes in partner agencies as a result of Employment First Priority efforts.
2. Continue to review, assess and identify possible needed changes in the partner agencies' state plans.
3. Continue to develop strategies and opportunities to provide training and promote awareness of the Employment First Initiative throughout Utah.
  - a. Include Employment First Initiatives into core curriculum training for DWS, DSPD, USOR and DSAMH.
  - b. Create readily distributable description for use by partner agencies for training and outreach to stakeholders.
4. Include the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health within the Unified State Plan.